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USSR-US-Berlin: Soviet Ambassador Abrasimov's recent approach to US Ambassador Rush was an attempt to quicken the pace of discussions on Berlin while smoking out signs of flexibility and give in the Allied position.

Abrasimov, who invited Rush to lunch with him Wednesday in East Berlin, came to the meeting armed with several procedural suggestions, but had little of substance to offer. The Soviets clearly are not yet ready to display any give in their own position. Specifically, Abrasimov avoided any response or substantive comment on the Allied paper presented at the most recent formal four power session on 21 July, and did not address himself to the access question.

Instead, he argued for an approach on a "strictly confidential bilateral" level. He quickly responded to a suggestion that the US and USSR exchange draft papers prior to the next four power meeting. In this connection he stated that the drafts should be "responsive to the views of both sides." Abrasimov added that the US paper should include a statement of Washington's desires and, "to put it bluntly," the US price.

The Soviet ambassador suggested that papers of this kind could form the basis of an "interim agreement," and noted that such agreements can last many years. Abrasimov's stress on this point suggests that Moscow may be weighing the advantages of an early limited agreement containing enough signs of progress to satisfy Bonn and enable early ratification of the Soviet - West German treaty.

The Soviets are aware, of course, that bilateral dealings with the US on Berlin can promote dissension and distrust among the Western allies, and Moscow has not been loath to exploit this in the past. Abrasimov's approach to Rush, however, seems to reflect Moscow's judgment that a bilateral approach

might also offer more promise for attempts both to get the talks off dead center and to sound out the Western position.

Moscow wants to probe specifically for concessions on Bonn's role in West Berlin. The Russians may be aware that the Allied paper given them in July was far narrower in scope than a draft that the West Germans formulated earlier this summer and suggested to the Western three. It included concessions on Berlin.

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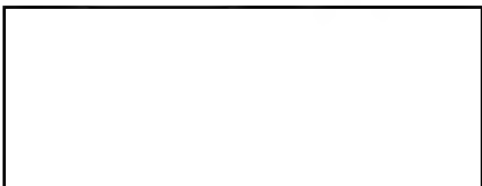
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